

Public Report

Audit Committee

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting:

Audit Committee – 30 July 2024

Report title:

External inspections, reviews, and audits update

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included in the Forward Plan?

No

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report:

Jo Brown – Assistant Chief Executive

Report Author(s):

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Ward(s) Affected:

All

Report Summary:

In line with the Audit Committee terms of reference, the purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the recent external inspections, reviews, and audits as well as to provide assurance that outgoing and outstanding recommendations from earlier inspections, audits and reviews, are being progressed.

The report provides a summary of progress against the recommendations from all external inspections, reviews and audits and sets out the details of arrangements for ensuring the accountability and governance around their implementation.

Recommendations:

That Audit Committee:

- Note the external inspections, reviews and audits which have taken place since the last report
- Note the progress made in relation to recommendations / areas for improvement and the governance arrangements in place (see Appendix 1)
- Continue to receive regular reports.

List of Appendices Included:

None

Background Papers

External audit and inspection recommendations reports to Audit Committee on 11 January 2022, 28 July 2022, 10 January 2023, 27 July 2023 and 9 January 2024.

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

None

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

External audits, inspections, and reviews update

1. Background

- 1.1 In line with the Audit Committee terms of reference, the purpose of this report is to provide details of the recent external inspections, reviews and audits across the Council and assurance that recommendations / areas for improvement are being progressed.
- 1.2 The last report was presented to Audit Committee on 9 January 2024. The report referred to external inspections, reviews and audits that had taken place since July 2023 which included seven new external inspections, reviews and audits.

2. Key issues

- 2.1 This report focusses on progress since the last Audit Committee meeting in January 2024 and is intended to provide an overview of the outcomes of external inspections, reviews, and audits. The report also aims to provide Audit Committee with assurance that arrangements are in place for managing the Council's response, including effective governance arrangements.
- 2.2 Governance arrangements are in place for monitoring and managing external inspection, review, and audit recommendations within each directorate. Regular progress against the recommendations is also reported and considered by the Strategic Leadership Team.
- 2.3 Eleven new inspections, reviews, and audits have taken place since January 2024. These include:

Children and Young People's Services

| Title | Date | Purpose | Outcome |
|---|-----------------|--|--|
| Liberty House Residential Children's Homes – Inspection Outcomes (<i>HMI Ofsted</i>) | January 2024 | Residential children's homes are inspected by HMI Ofsted under the Social Care Common Inspection Framework (SCCIF) and focus on evaluating the impact of care and support on the experiences and progress of children. | Overall rating 'requires Improvement to be good'. Four requirements made. Action plan implemented and monthly residential services meetings are in place to review and challenge progress, as well as monthly independent Reg 44 visits undertaken by Ofsted offering additional oversight to the implementation. Liberty House has since been re inspected and the Council is awaiting the outcome. |
| Care Leavers Peer Review (<i>LGA</i>) | March 2024 | The peer review was requested by the Council and focused on, and evaluated the service provided to, and outcomes for Rotherham's care leavers. | The LGA report on findings from the peer review went to SLT on the 2 July and is due to go to the Improving Lives Select Committee on the 30 July 2024. Progress against recommendations will be reported to the next Audit Committee. |

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| Pegasus House | April 2024 | Residential children's homes are inspected by HMI Ofsted under the Social Care Common Inspection Framework (SCCIF) and focus on evaluating the impact of care and support on the experiences and progress of children. | Overall rating 'requires Improvement to be good'. Two requirements made. An action plan has been produced and monthly residential services meetings are in place to review and challenge progress, as well as monthly independent Reg 44 visits undertaken by NYAS offering additional oversight to the implementation. |
| Ofsted Focused Visit (HMI Ofsted) | May 2024 | The visit focused on the local authorities' arrangements for children in need or subject to a child protection plan. Usually undertaken every three years as part of the ILACS Inspection Programme. | Awaiting formal publication of the report and findings from the focused visit by Ofsted. This is expected 14 July 2024. Progress against recommendations will be reported to the next Audit Committee. |

Adult Social Care, Housing and Public Health

| Title | Date | Purpose | Outcome |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|--|---|
| Adult Social Care Peer Review (LGA) | December 2023 | The peer review was commissioned by Adult Social Care to measure preparedness for the Care Quality Commission (CQC) assurance. | No formal rating. Key recommendations for the service were provided by the peer team (21 across four thematic areas of the CQC assurance framework for adult social care and local authorities). Models of best practice were also identified. All thematic areas are in progress. The programme of improvement is being driven by the service's CQC Assurance Board. A further peer review is being considered for January 2025 to review progress made and identify any further areas of best practice and development. |

Regeneration and Environment

| Title | Date | Purpose | Outcome |
|---|------------|--|--|
| DVSA MOT Vehicle Testing Station Site Review (DVSA) | March 2024 | Check conformity with standards expected by the DVSA – unannounced and periodic. | Satisfactory rating and two recommendations made which are now complete. |
| 2024 Prevent Duty Annual Assurance | March 2024 | Required annually by the Home Office. | "Exceeding" across all eight benchmark criteria. |

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| Assessment (Home Office) | | Under section 29 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 ('CTSA 2015'), specified authorities are required to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. To support local authorities, the Home Office (Homeland Security Group) carries out an annual assurance process against benchmarks set out in the Prevent duty toolkit for local authorities. | Four recommendations made and one is complete. Progress is overseen by Rotherham Prevent Partners Group, a subgroup of the Rotherham Counter terrorism Silver Group which reports to the Safer Rotherham Partnership. |
| Channel Panel Annual Assurance Statement (Home Office) | April 2024 | The Home Office annual assurance statement captures local authority compliance with the requirements laid out under sections 36 – 41 of the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (CTSA) (as amended by the Counter Terrorism Border Security Act 2019) relating to Channel panels and improving outcomes for those identified individuals who are at risk of being drawn into terrorism. | This was submitted after approval by the Strategic Director of R&E on 8 May 2024. Observation of the Channel Panel took place on 15 May 2024 and positive feedback received. Awaiting Home office response. |

Finance and Customer Services

| Title | Date | Purpose | Outcome |
|--|-------------------------------|---|---|
| Pooling Housing Capital Receipts 2022/23 (KPMG) | December 2023 | Required annually by legislation and provides assurance that Housing Capital Receipts have been appropriately accounted for. | No exceptions or errors were identified. |
| Public Service Network (PSN) | December 2023 – February 2024 | Annual required to use central government data sharing. Certificate to allow data sharing between RMBC and other public bodies including central government. | PSN certificate achieved for 2024. |
| Value for Money review 2022/23 | August 2023 to February 2024 | Required annually by legislation and | Report received and presented to Audit Committee in March 2024. |

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| (Grant Thornton) | | conducted by Grant Thornton. | <p>Positive outcome and no areas of significant weakness identified. Satisfied that adequate arrangements are in place for SEND.</p> <p>There were four new recommendations and two follow up recommendations. Two follow up recs complete. All other recs remain ongoing.</p> <p>Implementation of the recommendations was overseen by the Finance and Customer Services Directorate.</p> |
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2.4 In addition to the above, there are currently three annual audits which remain ongoing, including:

- Housing Benefit Audit 2022/23 conducted by Grant Thornton commenced in August 2023
- Statement of Accounts 2023/24 conducted by Grant Thornton commenced in March 2024
- Value for Money Review 2023/24 conducted by Grant Thornton commenced in March 2024.

2.5 Appendix 1 provides an overview a high-level of overview of the recommendations / areas for improvement and the progress the Council has made in responding to these. Once recommendations / areas for improvement are complete / closed and these have been reported to Audit Committee, these will be removed from the list. Where possible to do so, recommendations and actions have been grouped together under themes.

2.6 In total 17 recommendations / areas for improvement have been completed since the last report and 6 have been closed. There are 19 recommendations / areas for improvement which remain ongoing. Five of these are delayed, however none are delayed more than 12 months). The reasons for the delays are summarised within Appendix 1.

2.5 The status ratings applied to demonstrate the current position for each inspection, review, and audit include:

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|--------------------------------|--|
| Complete | All recommendations/areas for improvement are fully complete |
| In progress and on track | All recommendations/areas for improvement are on track to be delivered by the original agreed deadline |
| In progress and partly delayed | Recommendations/areas for improvement progressing, however target date for one or more area is behind the original agreed deadline |
| Significant delay | All recommendations/areas for improvement delayed or one area delayed more than twelve months past the original agreed deadline |
| No action required | There are no recommendations/areas for improvement, or the outcome is not yet known |

3. Lessons learnt

- 3.1 The Council continues to share learning from external inspections, reviews and audits across services and other directorates, where appropriate, to prevent future concerns/problems arising and enhance service delivery.
- 3.2 Furthermore, the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge report noted that the Council had *‘opened itself to a range of peer reviews to support a learning culture’*. The report also stated, *‘The council has undergone an impressive transformation and has many exemplary and commendable practices that other councils can learn from’*.

4. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 4.1 Audit Committee to note the recent external inspections, reviews and audits which have taken place and the progress made in implementing the recommendations since the last report in January 2024.
- 4.2 Audit Committee to note the governance arrangements that are currently in place for monitoring and managing the recommendations.
- 4.2 Audit Committee to continue to receive regular reports in relation to external inspections, reviews and audits and the progress made.

5. Consultation on proposal

- 5.1 Not applicable to this report.

6. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

- 6.1 The timescale for each recommendation varies depending on the individual inspection or audit. Target dates for each are included on Appendix 1.
- 6.2 The next report will be presented to Audit Committee in January 2025.

7. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

- 7.1 There are no direct financial and procurement implications as a result of this report.

7.2 Audits relating to finance and procurement and any related recommendations are outlined in the main body of the report.

8. Legal Advice and Implications

8.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations within this report.

8.2 Audits relating to legal services and any recommendations are outlined above.

9. Human Resources Advice and Implications

9.1 There are no Human Resources implications.

10. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

10.1 The recommendations in relation to inspections in both Children and Young People's Services and Adult Social Care have direct implications on the quality of services provided to children, young people and vulnerable adults. Completing the recommendations will improve outcomes for these groups.

11. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

11.1 When implementing changes / improvements services are to consider the impacts on services users and communities, including an individual or group with a protected characteristic. This may require the completion of an equality analysis to advance and maximise equality as well as eliminate discrimination and negative consequences.

11.2 An Equalities Informal Peer Challenge took place in March – April 2022 and actions are being progress via the existing Council's Equality Framework Action Plan.

12. Implications for CO2 Emissions and Climate Change

12.1 There are no direct CO2 emissions and climate change implications.

13. Implications for Partners

13.1 Partnership approaches are key to improving services and the improvements need to be of a multi-agency nature and owned cross the partnership.

14. Risks and Mitigation

- 14.1 There is a risk that actions are reported as completed without substance, it is important that arrangements are in place as part of the respective quality assurance regimes and monitored through performance management, evidencing not just completion of actions, but the associated outcomes. As governance arrangements are strengthened, these risks become mitigated.

15. Accountable Officer(s)

Simon Dennis, Corporate Improvement and Risk Manager

Tanya Lound, Corporate Improvement and Risk Officer

Approvals Obtained from:-

Jo Brown, Assistant Chief Executive

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